

*Scientists have found focussing on multiple media sources, such as email, phone, the internet, and television, all at once does not make you more efficient. In fact, multitaskers find it harder to focus, and are slower at switching between tasks. Jon Stewart reports:*

Researchers at Stanford University in the United States, divided a group of over 250 students into light or heavy **media multitaskers**. Light multitaskers **focus** on just one or two sources at a time - listening to music while working for example. Heavy multitaskers watch online videos, **surf the web**, talk or text on their mobiles, and write or read, all at the same time. Lead researcher Cliff Nass wanted to see how this would affect the way their brains work.

Clifford Nass: "You would think that people who are multitasking with all these media at once would be great at **ignoring irrelevant information**. However we discovered they are **suckers for** irrelevant information, so they're much worse than low multitaskers at **ignoring** the irrelevant."

Not only that, but multitaskers are worse at organising and sorting information, and worse at **switching from one task to another**. The findings have left the scientists with something of a mystery - why do people multitask at all? They say that in an **increasingly demanding work environment**, expecting staff to be constantly available by email and **instant message** whilst doing their jobs may actually mean that **productivity falls**.

Jon Stewart, BBC

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>media multitaskers</b>	people who use several forms of media at the same time
<b>focus</b>	concentrate
<b>surf the web</b>	spend time looking at different pages on the internet
<b>ignoring</b>	paying no attention to
<b>irrelevant information</b>	facts which are not related to what is being discussed or considered, and therefore not important
<b>suckers for</b>	People who are particularly fond of something (the word 'sucker' can be used to describe people who are easily manipulated and who don't think for themselves)
<b>switching from one task to another</b>	changing from doing one piece of work to a different one
<b>increasingly demanding work environment</b>	where we work (offices, factories, schools etc) becoming more difficult, and jobs requiring more time and attention than before
<b>instant message</b>	a type of service on the internet that allows the user to exchange written messages with other people who are online at the same time
<b>productivity falls</b>	the amount of things or product that people make or produce decreases

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8219212.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/08/090831\\_witn\\_multitasking.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/08/090831_witn_multitasking.shtml)